1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

114 question the natives about their customs and beliefs and understand their answers. I was therefore regretfully compelled to give up the idea of making a study of the people of the Little Andaman, and devoted the remainder of my time to the study of the tribes of the Great Andaman, particularly those of the North Andaman among whom Mr Man had not worked. I kept one boy from the Little Andaman with me for some months in the hope that he would learn sufficient Hindustani to act as an interpreter and so enable any future investigator to begin work with the great advantage that I had lacked.

124 In my work amongst the natives of the Great Andaman I at
[191] first made use of Hindustani, which the younger men and women all speak more or less imperfectly, and gradually acquired a knowledge of the dialects of the North Andaman. Towards the end of my stay in the islands I was able to obtain the services as interpreter of a man of the *Akar-Bale* tribe who spoke English well and was of considerable intelligence. He is shown in the photographs of Plates V and XIII. With his help I was able to do some work with the *Akar-Bale* and *A-Pučikwar* tribes, and I found that with such an interpreter I was able to obtain much fuller and more reliable results than I could by using my own knowledge of the native language supplemented by Hindustani. If I had had his services from the outset my work would have been much easier and more thorough.

128 The results of my researches on the physical anthropology of the Andaman Islanders have not been published. I hoped to be able to obtain the services of some one more competent in such matters than myself to assist or direct me in the measurement and study of the collection of skulls and skeletons that I brought to England and that is now in the Anthropological Museum at Cambridge. In this I was disappointed, and absence from England has prevented me from completing my work in this branch of research.

The languages of the Andaman Islands are chiefly of interest as affording material for the study of comparative grammar and

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

their fires beside them. On the night of 4–5 April 1953, while I was sleeping with them in the communal hut at Berié-Abdalù a sudden storm drenched us all, forcing us to huddle together round fires under the more waterproof parts of the roof. Numb with cold, but cheerful, they began joking, singing[1] and dancing, men and women separately; this went on all night, and no one suffered any ill effects from the soaking.

The Onge lack of hygiene extends also to their cooking utensils, which are never washed. In recent years the ocean has provided the Onges with a generous and unexpected gift; currents running from the south of Asia have thrown up on to the shores of Little Andaman a shoal of empty petrol drums, stout metal cylinders 1·3 metres high and eighty centimetres in diameter. The astute Onges have patiently divided each one in two, each section big enough to take a large pig. Set on big fires these serve as wonderful cooking pots, and the Onges are delighted with them. Unfortunately, however, although they were thrown up all round the island, the supply is beginning to dry up, and they are rapidly being eaten away by rust.

To boil food, the Onges set the drums on two large logs, laid parallel, with a fire between them. Stones are rarely used to support the drums, although there are plenty about in the interior of the island. On the coast, and for a fair way inland, there is nothing but coral, hard but liable when it gets hot to disintegrate under the heavy weight of the cylinders filled to the brim.

In these gifts from the sea the Onges could prepare tasty broths, but they invariably allow nearly all the water to boil away, and the cooking process is not considered complete until all the liquid has gone. While it is boiling, however, they take care not to lose the fat floating on the top, which they adore. They have even invented a curious sort of dipping-stick for the purpose of skimming the fat off. They take a shoot about twenty centimetres long from a plant which disintegrates into fibre when chewed. One end is chewed into a loose 'brush' and no one present misses his turn to dip it into the pot again and again to skim off a mouthful of fat, even getting up in the night in their eagerness for it. One stick naturally does for everyone, men, women and children, the

[1] The Onge voice is not markedly different from the European. It has a musical quality, fairly high-pitched but never shrill; the Onges never raise their voices, even in anger – disagreements invariably end in a dignified silence.